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ABSTRACT

To determine the level of participation by females in Cross Examination Debate Association (CEDA) debate tournaments in the Northeast region of the United States, a study examined gender characteristics of participants in seven regional tournaments in West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maryland, New York, New Jersey, and in the New England states. The findings were also compared to those of a similar study conducted in the western United States. Results indicated that the participation level of women in CEDA at Northeastern tournaments was slightly higher than that in the West (34.6% versus 28.5%). No difference in participation was found between spring semester and fall semester. In the Suffolk Fall Tournament, three times as many women were found to compete in the Novice Division as in the Varsity Division. Results also indicated that the number of male-male debate teams was similar in the East and West; however, the West had more mixed teams and the East had twice the number of all female teams. Win rates for the various gender mixes were found to be similar, and the percentage of women in final rounds of the Northeast tournament was 34.4%, almost identical to the overall percentage of women competing. These results suggest that the gender gap in intercollegiate debate is not nearly as severe as the discrepancies in ethnic/racial participation. (References are appended.) (SKC)

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An Examination of Gender-Based Levels of Participation in CEDA Debate

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An Examination of Gender-Based Levels
of Participation in CEDA Debate

Eleven years ago the first recommendation from the Sedalia Conference was that the "opportunities for experiences in forensics should be provided for as many people as possible....(and) (E)very effort should be made to encourage the participation of minorities in forensics activities" (McBath, 1975, p. 12). The Evanston Conference likewise endorsed a similar resolution "to increase and strengthen forensic participation by identifying ethnic, racial, gender, and handicap barriers which may currently inhibit student participation as well as disseminate findings concerning such barriers throughout the forensic community." This paper is intended to contribute to some degree to the understanding of forensic participation, specifically in CEDA debate in the Northeast Region of the United States. The focus will be on gender-based involvement.

Debate is generally thought to be more of a masculine-oriented activity. A sex-role inventory of NDT debaters (Logue, et al., 1980) found that 66.1% were categorized either instrumental or near instrumental on the Bem Sex Role Inventory. Of the 46 female debaters surveyed, 41.0% were identified in these categories; the remaining were either androgynous (35.2%) or expressive/near expressive (23.5%). Personality trait research on debaters has likewise supported the idea that debaters are characterized more by masculine traits such as tough-mindedness, achievement, dominance, aggression, competitiveness (Hetlinger and Hildreth, 1971; Wilson, 1979).

Eakins and Eakins (1978) write that "many females find the argumentative style not only difficult to use, but inhibiting when it is used against them" (p. 49). The suggested reason for this behavior is

that women prefer more personal opinion, attitudes, and personality than fact-bound information.

Regardless of its masculine-orientation or women's basic inhibition from the argumentative style, women who have attempted the rigors of debate researchers have found not to be significantly outclassed by their male counterparts (Hayes and McAdoo, 1972; Hensley and Strother, 1968; Rosen, et al., 1979). As Hayes and McAdoo indicated, "We do know those females who are presently active in college debate are capable of competing with males" (p. 130). But all too often, and for whatever reasons, women are not taking or being given the opportunities to see if they can succeed in this male-dominated activity.

Manchester and Friedley (1984) found only 15% of the 124 participants at the 1984 National Debate Tournament to be female. In Cross-Examination Debate Association competition at six, primarily Western tournaments, Medcalf (1984) found 28.5% of the 376 debaters to be women. Although this is not an outstanding percentage in terms of the college women population, it is almost twice the participation level of NDT debate.

The Method of this Study

In an effort to somewhat parallel the Medcalf work in the West, I chose to examine seven regional tournaments in the CEDA Northeast.The Northeast Region is comprised of schools in West Virginia (excluding Marshall University), Pennsylvania, Virginia, Maryland, New York, New Jersey and New England. Regional tournament was characterized by a predominance of schools from the region, without a major influx of "national" or out-of-region teams. Most tournaments within the Northeast are regional in nature. Tournaments were also representa-

tive of the entire area, with the University of Richmond as the southern most tournament, Towson, Shippensburg, and Penn State as midrange tournaments, and Suffolk and West Point as more northern schools.

In looking at participation by gender level, I was initially interested in percentage of women in CEDA debate, then the number of same sex teams and mixed teams with their win rates. In addition I examined the number of women in the final round of the tournament, as well as the number of women recognized as outstanding speakers. At one tournament it was possible, even on a limited basis, to compare the varsity and novice participation levels. And because tournaments were fairly evenly distributed between the Fall and Spring 1984-85 seasons, those comparisons were made.

Research Findings

The participation level of women in CEDA at Northeastern tournaments was slightly higher (34.6%) than that in the West (28.5%). An application of Chi-square (Table 1) indicated no significant difference between actual and expected participation between the two regions.

Table 1

Application of Chi-Square to Actual and Expected Participation in the West and Northeast

Region	Males	Females	Totals
Neast	246(257.5)	130(118.5)	376
West	269(257.5)	107(118.5)	376
	515	237	752

Chi Square (1) = 3.26, $p < .10$ (expected values in parentheses)

An examination of participation by semester shows no significant difference for male or female participation between Fall or Spring (Table 2).

Table 2

Male and Female CEDA Participation in Northeast

Tourney	# Teams	#Males	#Females	%Females
Suffolk (F) V	13	22	4	25.8
Suffolk (F) N	20	27	13	32.5
Pa St U (F) O	24	29	19	39.6
USMA (F) O	36	46	26	36.1
Towson (F) O	18	23	13	36.1
subtotals		147(x=36.75)	75(x=18.75)	33.8
Suffolk (S)O	19	28	10	26.3
Ship (S) O	29	38	20	34.5
Rich (S) O	29	33	25	43.1
subtotals		99(x=33)	55(x=18.33)	35.7
EAST TOTALS		246	130	34.6
WEST TOTALS		269	107	28.5

Of note here is the difference between women's participation at the novice and varsity levels at the Suffolk Fall Tournament. Approximatly three times as many women were competing in the Novice Division, as opposed to the Varsity. Since it is rare to find Novice divisions in Eastern tournaments, this limited example may provide insight into methods to improve female participation.

Table 3

Gender Makeup of Team Structure

Tourney	#MM	#MF	#FF	%W-MM	%W-MF	%W-FF	%FFinals	%FSpeaks
Suffolk(V)	9	4	0	44	66.6	--	50	33.3
Suffolk(N)	11	5	4	40	60	60	100	50
Pa.State	10	9	5	53.3	46.3	50	0	40
USMA	16	14	6	59.2	42.9	43.8	0	0
Towson	8	7	3	50	44.4	55.6	0	29
Suffolk	12	4	3	52.1	53.1	54.2	50	30
Ship	17	4	8	53.9	50	47.9	50	40
Rich	12	9	8	53.1	58.3	43.8	25	0
TOTALS	95	56	37	52.1	50.5	48.9	34.4	27.79
West TOTALS	98	73	17	52.8	48.1	46.2	NA	NA

The number of male-male teams is very similar in the East and West. The West, however, boasts a number of more mixed teams, but the East has twice the number of all female teams. The win rates for the various gender mixes is quite similar --52% to 48.9%. This win rates compared between East and West are virtually identical.

The percentage of women in the final round of a CEDA tournament in the Northeast is 34.4%, almost identical to the overall percentage of women competing in the tournaments. Women are proportionally represented in the final rounds to their participation numbers. Slightly lower is the number of women who are recognized as outstanding speakers (27.79%), but still proportional to the numbers competing.

Discussion/Future Research Implications

Even though a year of growth separates the Medcalf findings from those of the Northeast, the participation levels of males and females, and the makeup of the teams are quite similar.

This survey suggests that participation levels are maintained

from semester to semester, with no falloff the Spring semester. This may be due to CEDA's policy of switching to a new topic for the second semester -- individuals do not get bored with one topic and/or new persons can replace first semester debaters who leave the activity.

For all practical purposes the success rate of same-sex teams and mixed teams is the same. Traditionally, male-male teams will perform better than mixed or female-female teams, but this is only a 3.2% advantage in the East, and slightly greater in the West, 6.6%.

With such small numbers the novice-varsity female distinction is questionable, but deserves further examination. Women may have a desire to try the activity, but become discouraged for various reasons.

Regional differences need to be further examined, but upon this and the Medcalf work,similarity abounds. For purposes of more parallelism, the University of Nevada - Reno tournament was not included in the Western results. Reno is a tournament which attracts teams from across the United States, whereas the other tournaments compared are more regional in makeup. There is certainly a need to further examine the participation and success rate of women in "national" CEDA competition.

Certainly the gender of the coaching staff might shed some light on the composition of debate teams. The Western CEDA coaching staff (CA,AL, OR, and WA) is 30.6% female and 69.4% male, as estimated by the directors of CEDA membership programs. In the East those figures are signifcantly different: 81% of the CEDA membership programs are directed by men, 19% directed by women.

It is also important to examine the gender-level of squads in relation to the gender of the director/coach. Do male coaches have predominately male squads? Do female coaches have more female debaters? Answers to these and similar questions might lead us to a better understanding of who participates. At Towson this season, 29 debaters actually competed in tournaments; of those 44.8% were women. This figure is 10% hgher than for female participation in the Northeast and 16.3% higher than in the West.

CEDA appears to be a place where more women are discovering the opportunity to develop and improve their argumentation skills; but even a 28.5% - 34.6% population of women is not a high enough service level relative to the numbers of women in our colleges, universities, and community colleges.

Though serious, the gender gap in intercollegiate debate is not nearly as sever as the yet explored levels of ethnic/racial involvement. This area should be the next concern as forensic educators deal with increasing the female participation levels.

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